

Putting Benefits To Work For PeopleSM

Group Insights

The New York Life Group Benefit Solutions Newsletter

The July edition features an interview with enrollment consultant Sheilah Rund who analyzes pandemic impacts on the workplace and offers five ways to improve enrollment outcomes. You can also see how an employee afflicted with severe anxiety adapted to a new and thriving role. Our legislative analysis offers previews of Oregon and Colorado leave laws. And, tune in to our podcast to discover how the right technology can improve benefit delivery, from enrollment selection to daily administration.



The Pandemic's Impact on Enrollment

Sheilah Rund, a New York Life Group Benefit Solutions (NYL GBS) Enrollment Consultant, weighs in on new challenges.

Q: How has the pandemic changed enrollment? Will we see changes in the next few years?

Many are familiar with the great resignation that has impacted so many employers since the outbreak of COVID-19. Industries continue to struggle to find enough workers while many employers have adopted a hybrid model of working. A hybrid model blends onsite and remote work while some companies have entire operations offsite. Our clients are typically in one or both scenarios which means employers are constantly working to retain workers or attract new workers.

Employers are also faced with at least five generations of workers and a culturally diverse work population. More than ever, employers and human resource departments must review and adapt the way they communicate benefits to connect with their entire workforce. They can no longer communicate benefits on an annual basis, but find they must communicate benefits year-round to keep employees engaged in the additional value of their benefit offering.

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While this hybrid work environment won't change, many employers have adapted with good results. They have recognized that a remote workforce gives them access to employees in communities outside of their own region, which can be critical to filling vital roles in their organization. For some companies, they have reduced operating expenses by closing physical locations, so they no longer have monthly leases, maintenance expenses, or utility payments. And, employee morale can often increase for at-home workers, which can increase productivity.

Q: With many employers faced with a hybrid workforce, what are some pros and cons to a remote environment?

With a hybrid model, it's more difficult to bring all employees together for group meetings. Face-to-face enrollment support can become challenging as well. However, working remotely doesn't mean group meetings and one-on-one counseling sessions disappear. Many employers have moved to virtual events, which can support live or recorded webinars to educate employees about benefits. Benefit counseling can also be supported through web-based video conferencing or call center support.

Hybrid work models have increased the need for digital communication options and digital self-enrollment methods driven by benefit administration technology. Videos, calculators, and interactive decision support tools will continue to provide additional value to employers who want to make sure all employees have the resources to make informed decisions about their benefits.

Q: How can NYL GBS Enrollment Solutions help address these needs?

NYL GBS is working hard to ensure our clients' enrollment solutions are cutting edge and will help educate their employees on their benefits in a variety of ways. Through our Enrollment Solutions team, clients have access to digital resources like automated email campaigns, texting campaigns, educational microsites, and product videos. NYL GBS also has over 300 benefit counselors (85+ fluent in Spanish) who can assist with on-site or virtual group meetings. Our Enrollment Solutions and Marketing teams continuously monitor industry trends to ensure we can provide our clients with timely resources that will help make their jobs easier and improve their understanding of employee-benefit needs.

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Top Five Ways to Improve Enrollment Outcomes:

- 1 At enrollment time, require all benefit-eligible employees to make a mandatory election to opt-in or waive all benefit elections.
- 2 Offer voluntary benefits on an annual basis at the same time as employer-sponsored benefits, like medical options.
- 3 Provide group meetings, either in person or online, where at least 75% of benefit-eligible participants can learn about their benefits and ask questions for clarity.
- 4 Provide a minimum of two pre-enrollment employee educational communication touchpoints. Employees may not purchase what they don't understand.
- 5 Use the same enrollment system for all benefits. Make enrolling easy for employees and provide digital enrollment methods as a primary method.



**August 1 – 4,
2022**

DMEC Annual Conference is arriving in August.

If you're in Denver, August 1-4, 2022, stop by and see us at the DMEC Annual Conference. Our panel session, "Working Together to Cross the Finish Line," offers insights into a unique program that helps people with disabilities return to healthy and productive lives. And, join us as we speak alongside FINEOS about adapting benefits administration to meet the requirements of today's evolving insurance landscape.

Reach out to your NYL GBS representative for more information, schedule time to chat, or meet at our booth #212.



How You Can Prepare for Upcoming Paid Family Medical Leave Laws

Steps for employers ahead of Oregon and Colorado legislation.

Oregon and Colorado are the next two states to implement their respective Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) laws. In Oregon, benefits administration and payment will begin on September 3, 2023. In Colorado, benefits administration and payment will begin on January 1, 2024. Rulemaking is ongoing in both states, and there are things employers should consider now to prepare for upcoming benefit payment.

1. Get payroll ready for employee deductions.

Both Oregon and Colorado will allow employers to set up employee payroll deductions for employees to contribute to the cost of the program, and both states' payroll deductions should begin on January 1, 2023. If an employer chooses to remain in either state program, they will need to begin issuing contributions to the applicable state early in the second quarter of 2023.

- › In Oregon, the overall combined contribution rate is 1% of employee wages up to \$132,900. Employees contribute 60% of this rate while employers contribute the remaining 40%.¹
 - If the employer has less than 25 total employees, they are only obligated to collect the 0.60% of wages collected from the employees; they do not have to contribute.
 - An employer can choose to pay the entire premium amount if they choose.
- › In Colorado, the overall combined contribution rate is 0.90% of employee wages up to the Social Security wage base (currently \$147,000). Employees and employers each contribute 50% of this amount (0.45% of wages).²
 - If the employer has less than 10 employees, they are only obligated to collect the 0.45% of wages from employees; they do not have to contribute.
 - An employer can choose to pay the entire premium amount if they choose.

As states do not permit employers to retroactively collect employee contributions, it is imperative that employers prepare to withhold these deductions beginning January 1, 2023.

2. Prepare for communications to employees about payroll deductions.

Before deductions begin on January 1, 2023, employers should communicate it to their employees. At this time, neither Oregon nor Colorado have issued a template for this purpose. However, both states have published materials that may be helpful:

- › [Oregon Program Overview](#) (additional [languages beyond English](#) are also available)
- › [Colorado Break Room Poster](#) (currently only available in English)

We will continue to update our clients about any specific future communication requirements.

3. Consider a private plan.

Both Oregon and Colorado permit employers to offer a private plan instead of participating in the state program. Private plan offerings in either state can be either fully insured offerings or employer funded administrative services only (ASO)/advice to pay (ATP). An employer will need to apply to the applicable state for a private plan exemption and receive approval from the state, regardless of which funding type they choose.

Employers wanting to offer a private plan will want to make the private plan exemption decision, apply to the state, and receive approval as early as possible prior to January 1, 2023 to avoid paying into the state plan. Employers may seek private plan exemption approval after January 1, 2023; however, they will be obligated to contribute to the state until the quarter after receiving exemption approval.

- › Colorado has not yet released their regulations regarding private plan exemptions and exactly how the process will work, though we anticipate they may allow employers to submit a declaration of intent to offer private plans in 2022, followed by an actual submission of policy document in 2023. We will share more as this information becomes available.
- › Oregon will begin to accept private plan exemption declarations of intent beginning in September 2022 (exact date not yet released by the state). This process will allow an employer to state that they intend to offer a private plan when the program goes live and receive a preliminary exemption approval from the state.
 - In the declaration of intent submission, the employer will need to indicate if they plan to offer a fully insured coverage, or an employer funded (ASO/ATP) coverage.
 - The declaration of intent for a private plan must be submitted prior to November 30, 2022 to be considered for approval prior to January 1, 2023.
 - Employers that have been approved for declarations of intent will have until May 31, 2023 to submit the full private plan application that includes a policy document for final approval from the state before benefits become effective September 3, 2023.

Contact your sales representative for assistance or to request quotes.

NYL GBS is here to support employers as they go through this process, and we can support quoting Oregon PFML now. The Colorado quoting date is dependent on when the state releases their regulations. We intend to offer both fully insured and employer funded plan administration options in Oregon and Colorado.

Please contact your NYL GBS sales representative for assistance with questions or requests for quotes.

The information about paid leaves for employees in Oregon and Colorado is being provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or a legal opinion on any specific facts or circumstances. Please refer to the [Oregon](#) and [Colorado](#) websites for more information. The information is for general informational purposes only, and you are urged to consult a lawyer concerning your own situation and any specific legal questions you may have. New York Life Group Benefits Solutions assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application or any information supplied in this publication.

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The Group Solutions Sit-Down Podcast



Episode 7 – Technology Trends: Transforming Employee Benefits Administration

[Listen now](#) 

We are in an era defined by change. New forces are shaping the workplace and redefining expectations for both employers and employees. With greater demands on organizations, the role of technology has evolved - not only for where and how work is performed, but also for the way it's transforming the overall benefit delivery experience.

Join us for our [newest podcast episode](#) where Corey Remillard, Benefits Technology Lead for New York Life Group Benefit Solutions, highlights how the right technology, automation, and service has the power to improve every aspect of the benefit delivery experience: from benefits selection to enrollment to ongoing administration.

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THE CLAIMANT'S JOURNEY

Lowering Occupational Stressors with Vocational Coaching



In this edition of the Claimant's Journey, we feature Sarah. She has a demanding job in the healthcare industry. The grinding pace resulted in debilitating panic and anxiety attacks, and she eventually requested a leave of absence. Sarah is anxious to return to work but will need to look at alternative work settings and/or jobs.

As part of the process to get Sarah back to work in a high-level functioning role, NYL GBS recommended vocational coaching focused on exploring various roles which would allow Sarah to use her skills, be fulfilled, and at the same time, not feel overly stressed. The NYL GBS Vocational Coach was able to reach out to her employer's recruiter and identify roles that matched her skills and current capabilities. Sarah and the NYL GBS Vocational Coach reviewed alternative job options and discussed how to grow her career in new positions. The NYL GBS Vocational Coach assisted Sarah in obtaining a fitness-for-duty test, which was required by her employer, as well as her own health care provider's release. Sarah returned to work safely in an alternative job.

The work of the NYL GBS Vocational Coach and Sarah's willingness to search new career opportunities allowed her to interview and ultimately be selected for an alternative job. In her new role, at her same employer, Sarah would be called upon to use the knowledge

from her prior role to answer questions and provide instructions. After she completed the initial training, the role transitioned to work at home which helped her to manage her environment and keep stressors low. Both Sarah and her employer are thriving with this new arrangement.

The above story is for illustrative purposes. The name of the individual and some details have been changed to protect their identity but was based on a real person's experience.



Do you have a story you'd like us to share?
Contact us at GroupInsights@NewYorkLife.com.



Statutory Benefits Quick Reference Guide

Remember that our [Statutory Benefits Quick Reference Guide](#) is always available for your review. NYL GBS monitors state disability and paid family leave laws and will revise the guide to reflect the latest in statutory updates.



Prepare for Ever-Evolving State Paid Leave Laws.

[Watch our recent webinar for insights »](#)

Increasing leave legislation means a surge in leave complexity. You can depend on us to share insights into emerging benefit trends, employee sentiment, and best practices to help enhance your absence management program and future planning. NYL GBS legal and compliance experts continually monitor legislative proposals and actions to help you stay ahead of the curve.

[Our recent webinar](#) features a multi-state employer and our PFML experts discussing ways you can prepare for evolving PFML plans.

Free webinars for New York Life Group Benefit Solutions clients.



As a reminder, My Secure Advantage (MSA)³, hosts financial wellness webinars⁴ every month, which are free for NYL GBS clients.

The webinars are presented on scheduled Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. EST (9:00 a.m. PST) and 3:00 p.m. EST (12:00 p.m. PST). The upcoming webinars include:

Tuesday, August 9

Common Risks to Your Retirement Plan

Retirement shouldn't be fraught with uncertainty. You may have a firm retirement plan centered around your savings and sources of income, but sometimes even the best laid plans fall short. In this class, we will review some of the risks that could impact your plan like outliving your savings or not having a realistic plan for managing your finances during retirement.

[Register here: 9 a.m. PST](#) | [Register here: 12 p.m. PST](#)

Thursday, August 25

Understanding Medicare

Health care costs are typically one of the biggest expenses in our budget, and the Medicare Federal Health Insurance Program is intended to help cover these expenditures after we turn 65. But what if we want to retire before age 65 or have access to an employer-sponsored health care plan after 65? This class will review how your out-of-pocket expenses may go up or down depending on when you retire and start receiving your Medicare benefits.

[Register here: 9 a.m. PST](#) | [Register here: 12 p.m. PST](#)

Tuesday, September 13

Planning for College 101

The costs of attending college continue to increase, so planning is imperative. This class will discuss different types of college savings accounts and review the financial aid process. It may be important to get funds from as many sources as possible, so we'll review scholarships, grants, and loans. Get ready to leave this class better prepared to establish and fund your college savings goals.

[Register here: 9 a.m. PST](#) | [Register here: 12 p.m. PST](#)

Thursday, September 22

Student Loan Repayment Strategies

For many employees, especially in the first half of their careers, student loan payments are a significant monthly expense. This class helps attendees consider repayment options that meet their individual goals. We discuss repayment options for both federal and private loans, which include how to lower monthly payments or pay off loans faster.

[Register here: 9 a.m. PST](#) | [Register here: 12 p.m. PST](#)

If you also have New York Life Group Benefit Solutions' Life Assistance Program (LAP)⁵, ask your Account Manager to provide you with the quarterly calendar of LAP webinars, which also includes the MSA webinars.

¹ [Paid Leave Oregon Bulletin](#).

² [Colorado Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program](#).

³ My Secure Advantage is NOT insurance and does not provide reimbursement for financial losses. Customers are required to pay the entire discounted charge for any discounted products or services available through these programs. Programs are provided through a third party vendor who is solely responsible for their products and services. Full terms, conditions and exclusions are contained in the applicable client program description, and are subject to change. Program availability may vary by plan type and location, and is not available where prohibited by law. This program is not available under policies insured by New York Life Group Insurance Company of NY.

⁴ Seminars are provided through a third party vendor who is solely responsible for their products and services. Terms and conditions are contained in the client program description, and are subject to change. Program availability may vary by plan type and location, and is not available where prohibited by law.

⁵ Life Assistance Program (LAP) These programs are NOT insurance and do not provide reimbursement for financial losses. Some restrictions may apply. The Life Assistance Program products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including Evernorth Behavioral Health, Inc. and Evernorth Care Solutions, Inc. Customers are required to pay the entire discounted charge for any discounted products or services available through these programs. Programs are provided through third party vendors who are solely responsible for their products and services. Full terms, conditions and exclusions are contained in the applicable client program description, and are subject to change. Program availability may vary by plan type and location, and are not available where prohibited by law. These programs are not available under policies issued by New York Life Group Insurance Company of NY. Cigna Corporation and its subsidiaries are not affiliated with New York Life Insurance Company and its subsidiaries.

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